

Westhampton Memorial Library

# STONE WALLS

Summer 1977



It's May 9 and the tulips are buried under eight inches of snow. It's not only the people of these hills that are independent!

I am going to use this space this time to better acquaint you with the backbone of **STONE WALLS**, its Editorial Board and its subscribers.

Eight of our hilltowns are represented on the Editorial Board. Brook Lynes, from Cummington, has been with us from practically the beginning. Her son, Geoff, as a High School student, wrote some of our most appealing articles. Ida Joslyn of Worthington is practically as much to blame for this whole thing as I am. She has, from the beginning, taken responsibility for the sometimes rather taxing work of collecting articles and readying them for the printer. Connie Dorrington, also a Worthingtonite, not only mans our subscription files and sends them out, but also travels all over creation delivering magazines and collecting ads. Diana Schelle, who is Town Clerk of Montgomery, has given us many hours, especially in coordinating our intentions with those of our printer. Louise Mason, Russell Librarian, has been busy winters with the job that Ida does until she goes to Florida in November. But that's not all. She also trucks here and there delivering magazines, collecting ads, or researching articles. Lucy Conant of Chester has recently brought to **STONE WALLS** an energetic mind and the willingness to collect articles, ads, and deliver magazines in the Chester area. Waino Tuominen of Huntington has lent **STONE WALLS** an enthusiastic eagerness to go out and enhance the magazine's visibility — a somewhat thankless task. Barbara Brainerd, who teaches English and advises the literary magazine at Westfield High School, lives in Blandford and has recently contributed literary suggestions and work to **STONE WALLS**. She also recruited our newest board-member, Helena Duris of Granville, curator of their museum and a gold-mine of historical information. As for me, I take care of finance, coordinate with the printer, deliver magazines, collect ads, and research articles when I get the chance. We all wear lots of hats. If we don't know about lay-out or how to collect ads (one of those skills that one avoids learning), well, then, we learn along the way.

**STONE WALLS** is growing. We now send out subscriptions as far away as Oregon, Texas, Michigan, and the Carolinas. Word has merely traveled by the grape-vine, but today's grape-vine has become rather extensive.

You will notice several more pages of ads than usual in this issue. We do not intend to make a habit of this. Several board members were just especially and unexpectedly energetic. All our ads are from the small businesses of our towns, businesses which provide services vital to our communities. Your patronage will help them continue to serve us.

STONE WALLS  
Box 85  
Huntington, Massachusetts 01050  
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*Ellie Lazarus*

**STONE WALLS** is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$6.00 a year, \$1.60 for individual copies. The retail price of individual copies may be modified only with the permission of the Editorial Board. We ask that an additional 40 cents be enclosed with every special request for a magazine to be mailed. Otherwise it will wait until the next quarterly mailing.

We welcome unsolicited manuscripts and illustrations from our readers about the hilltowns of the Berkshires. We also welcome letters from our readers. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any form, with the exception of brief excerpts for review purposes, without the express consent of the editors of **STONE WALLS**. © STONE WALLS 1977

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# LILY POND GHOSTS

by Virginia Ladd Otis

On the Geological Survey map of Goshen is shown a narrow swampy area, rectangular in shape, lying northwest and south west, directly west of Goshen Center and midway between Ball road and Loomis road, designated as Lily Pond. There is nothing to show that this low wet spot on the map is unique among the many swamps scattered over the countryside, some of them much larger. There is a difference, however, for Lily Pond is a sphagnum bog, known among biologists as a true bog.

Geologists inform us that the true bog is of glacial origin, that a great mass of ice broken from the main glacier eventually melted in one spot, leaving a deep pothole filled with water. For thousands of years now, nature has been busy trying to reclaim the barren spot to plant life. Thick carpets of sphagnum moss, acres in extent, cover the main surface of the bog, set apart from the shore all around by a margin of water twenty or thirty feet wide. Over the centuries the interlacings of the roots of

these plants have formed and built up soil, enabling many other plants to find a footing here...among them grasses, cranberries, pitcher plants, and sundew. Bog soils are especially acid and low in nitrogen. Pitcher plants and sundew compensate for this lack by catching and digesting insects.

About the dead roots of the sphagnum mat peat is being formed, accounting for the blackness of the water. When nature's plan for the bog is finished, the deep hole will be filled with earth, and trees will be growing there. Such a goal will not be reached until more centuries have passed.

The Hampshire History, speaking of Lily Pond, calls it "a morass surrounded by cliffs, said to be the repository of a stagecoach and horses." Strange as it may seem, the Old Post Road from Northampton to Albany traversed this bog by means of a floating bridge, and the legend of the lost stagecoach is still repeated among Goshen residents.



Drawing by D. Harrington

dclaffey harrington

An allusion is made to this bridge in a description of Lily Pond in Hiram Barrus's **History of Goshen** published in 1881: "Lily Pond is a natural reservoir of mire and water. Cattle cannot cross it in safety and the bridge which passes over it is continually sinking so as to require repeated layers of logs and earth to bring it up to a suitable height above water to make traveling safe. Samuel Olds lowered the outlet to the pond nearly twenty feet, hoping to drain out the surplus water and reduce the land to cultivation without success. It is said he invested the first hundred dollars of the James Fund in this enterprise."

Samuel Olds was not the only person to be defeated by the bog. Some years ago a New York firm bought the watery tract with an eye to harvesting the sphagnum or peat moss for the florists' market, but the difficulty in harvesting the crop made it an impractical venture. In times past individuals gathered quarts of cranberries there, for the channel around the edge was narrower, and a person with athletic tendencies could cross on a log thrown across. Now such a feat is impossible, owing to the width of the stream.

One autumn our family, bent on adventure, determined to find out for ourselves the quality of the cranberrying on the bog. Three of us, with much puffing and blowing and frequent stops for rest, carried our kayak down the mile of woods road (actually the old stage road) from Ball Road. Having launched ourselves from the muddy shore, we paddled through channels, raising a raft of wood ducks. We shivered slightly at the sinister aspect of the water, for it was very cold to the hand, dark, and deep. Our pilot edged the kayak close to the vegetation in the middle, and I climbed out on a shaky clump of grass, clutching my cranberry pail. As soon as I had scrambled safely back from the water's edge, I stood up unsteadily and

peered about, looking for cranberries. Grass and moss stretched out before me like a meadow, but no red jewels of fruit shone there, so I started hiking, a walk which proved to be a strange experience.

The sensation was comparable to that of walking on a thick innerspring mattress which gives at every step, yet holds one's weight. Often cold water bubbled up through the moss to my knees, filling my mid-calf boots with water; and with the disturbance a nauseous sulphur-dioxide gas was released into the air. Here and there were open spots, black and wet. I was careful to avoid these. After a time, I found ripe cranberries, but they were a poor crop, scattered so that I must walk far between handfuls. Although the walking appeared level, it proved to be up and down hill at every step. I picked for an hour, with a quart of berries to show for it, while the others paddled about the channels.

Although logging operations have cleared the old Post Road on both sides of the pond, it still has a lonesome, desolate aspect, though not without its beauty. The long oval of the pond is set in a high green frame of hemlocks accented on the western side by gray cliffs rising steeply from the water. Acres of foliage on the sphagnum mat change from buff to rich, red-brown in autumn; while the waters encompassing and traversing the mat in straight lines of regular width are like black paths. Standing high on the cliffs, one finds oneself bemused by this tranquility, charmed by this color, as one peers carefully over the edge of granite rock shaggy with lichens...who knows to what depths...into the ebony waters.

In this lost place it is hard to believe that a floating bridge once spanned the bog to allow traffic to cross. The thought of being stranded there at night-fall makes one shiver, for one cannot help wondering whether the ghosts of Lily Pond have been laid to rest!

# **RECOLLECTIONS OF MY EARLY BOYHOOD DAYS**

**by Charles B. Lyman b. 1829 - d. 1913  
contributed by T.L. Hendrick**

Stephen and his brother Timothy Lyman left their home in Southampton in 1763 for Murrayfield, now Chester, seventeen miles west of Southampton. Tall stalwart young men with strong hands and hearts, they went out into the wilds together and cleared from the native forest adjoining farms on which they lived through life. Their way was through an unbroken forest with no track for their guide but that of the bear and deer. A single camp chest contained their frugal outfit, a few loaves of Boston brown bread, a cheese, a ball of butter, and two or three tow shirts. Each grasping one handle of the chest with one hand and carrying his ax with the other, they set out for their wild mountainous home. As they rested at frequent intervals, they marked the trees with their axes to guide their way back to their native place. Their farms were given them on condition that each one within the space of three years should build a dwelling house on his lot — twenty-four feet by eighteen, and seven feet, and have seven acres well cleared and brought to English grass or ploughed and actually a family occupying the farm for a period of six years and within eight years settle a Protestant minister. Stephen and Timothy are recorded among those who organized the Congregational Church in Chester November 14, 1769, of which the former

was the first deacon. Each settler was given one hundred acres of land as an encouragement. The writer has in his possession a deed of March 13, 1770 of Elias Lyman to Stephen Lyman a tract of land containing one hundred acres for five pound lawful money per acre, another deed from Joshua Draper of about thirty acres date 1786, which joined the original tract.

Stephen and Timothy located their farms one mile west of Chester Center, where the meeting house now stands. Their houses, about forty rods apart, were in a very fine location, on good land facing east. There was a high hill some distance on the west. The land in front descended gradually part of the way and part of it quite sharp to the brook about midway to the church and school where the grade was nearly as sharp as to the center. The road on which they settled was made after they went there and ran due north and south, about a mile long. Timothy Lyman's house was near the head of the street on the north, south of this a few rods was Stephen Lyman's then a house built by Mr. Pomeroy, but occupied in the writer's day by Asa Foot. About a hundred yards further on south to the end of the road, Sumner Williams lived. About a hundred yards on east of Mr. Williams' down the hill was the home of Chester Lyman. Near

his house on the north was a school-house where a part of the children went to school.

On the road to the church next to Timothy Lyman's east, was the house of John Smith. A few rods below, a small house where Mr. Cowing lived. It was burned one night and never re-built. A short distance off the road was a house and barn with a few acres of good land, where Crispus Lyman lived, who sold his first home to Otis Taylor. After Crispus left, the writer's brother lived there a few years. On the east side of the brook up the hill was the home of David B. Tinker who made boots and shoes for the town and fattened the best pig of anyone in the neighborhood. The next house was Alva Foot's. Then, another hill, and on the highest point was the old church, an immense structure, to my youthful mind, founded on a rock, with long rows of horse sheds on east, south and west. It had a tall steeple and a large bell hung on it. In the audience room were six rows of square pews. In the galleries, two rows of singer's seats and a row of square pews on three sides, altogether capable of seating several hundred people.

This church was built in 1794. People from all parts of the town came here to church, and it was well filled. The town meetings were held in it, and there used to be some lively politicians hustling around within its walls. When we were at school one day near by, there came up a dry thunder shower with very little rain. but there were three sharp flashes of lightening, one of which struck the rod on the steeple following down to a break in the rod on the second floor of the bellfry, where it made a great gap, tearing out nearly one side, then passed off doing no more harm.

This old church was taken down in 1840, having outgrown the wants of the town, and a much smaller one was built a few rods north with a basement underneath for the use of the town, so that no more elections were held in the church.

The first school house on my recollection was a very old one-storied affair. I could not have been more than three or four years old when I took my first lesson in it. It was taken down in a year or two and a new one built on the same site. this was two stories, the lower one for common, the upper one for select school. The writer's father built it. There were about sixty scholars on the lower floor, and twenty-five or thirty in the upper room, which had a fall or winter term. Three-fourths of a mile east was a school house with sixty scholars. One and a quarter miles south-west was a school house of about twenty-five scholars. One and a half miles south was one of thirty of more. Now they have all vanished but the one in the center which for several years has had an average of six scholars.

The first school teacher I remember was George W. Lyman who afterwards was in the mercantile business in Middlefield, Springfield, and Troy, and then moved to Madison, Ohio where he died last December at the age of eighty-six. Another teacher was MacMaster who settled in Minnesota. A Mrs. Whiting, wife of the wagon-maker, taught several terms. She was one of the best, and is still living in Hartford, Connecticut. Many others could be mentioned.

Opposite the schoolhouse lived Ashail Wright who was the lawyer of the town. the Post Office was kept there. Nearby was a small building for his office, where Charles Wright, the son, had a store for a short time. Charles was the father of Ashley Wright, the member of Congress from this district. Mr. Whitney afterwards lived there, and used the office for a wagon shop. Next north, was the house and large store of Daniel Munson. the house and office of Dr. T.K. DeWolf became the blacksmith shop of Eliphalet Coleman with his house near by, and, in turn, the store and house of Warren Reed, who used

to have two or three apprentices to help him. North was the old tavern of Mr. Whipple.

Near here was a Baptist church. One of my earliest recollections was the removal of this church to Plunketville, now called North Chester, where T. K. Plunket had a cotton mill.

You can imagine the great times the boys and girls used to have on their tramps to school and plodding down the hill when the fences and hollows were covered and filled with snow packed hard by winds. the games of High Spy and many other outdoor sports, the long winter evenings with story telling, blindman's buff, checkers, and many other games. Of apples we had plenty, not the choice fruit of the present day, but good common ones nuts, very few chestnuts or butternuts, but plenty of beech nuts, which, though small, were very rich.

We boys were set to work almost as soon as we could walk, dropping potatoes for planting, picking them up after digging, in the fall, picking apples, shaking out the grass after the mowers, and driving the cows to and from the pasture. When we wanted a sled to ride on, we could not go to the store and buy one, for they did not have them. We went to the woods, found a small tree with a crook in the butt, cut and split it, shaved and polished, put pins in the runners beams across, a rave on top, a round stick for a roll in front, split at one end, fasten to the roll and a neap or pole, a board on the beams and we had a sled equal to the best of them.

In the spring we had great times, helping with the maple sugar. For every farm had good sugar orchards. None of the modern appliances were at hand, but two crotchet sticks set in the ground, the right distance apart, them a pole across one end of each crotch and large iron kettles suspended by chains with a large log on each side. With the kettles filled

and with plenty of dry wood, we had a busy time to keep the sap boiling. But we got paid of it all at night, for then came sugaring off.

Every farmer had a yoke of oxen and one or two, sometimes four, pair of steers growing up to take the place of the old ones when sold. Most of them had flocks of sheep numbering from fifty to two hundred. A good many pigs were raised and in the fall would run in the woods and live on beech nuts and get very fat by the time the snow came. A few cows were kept, and cheese and butter were made in the summer, not through the winter, as the cows were mostly dry and no grain was fed them.

Grass was the principle crop grown and all of it had to be cut by hand commencing about the 4th of July and finishing anywhere in the month of August. Hardly any rowan was cut. We used to plant an acre of corn, almost always getting a good crop. From one to two acres of potatoes the common yield was 300 to 500 bushels an acre, in some instances 600 or more were harvested. there was not much market for them, they were mostly fed out to stock. when the western railroad was being built through Chester, a great many were sold to the workmen for 25 cents a bushel, and some as low as 12½ cents.

The farming tools were few.an ox cart, a large and small plow, a seven tooth drag, a stone boat, and an ox sled. The soil was good strong land, rough and stony, requiring a good deal of hard work with men and teams to get it into condition to grow a crop. Good crops of oats were grown, but little rye unless we were clearing off a new piece. If so, burned-over rye was sown and what could not be reached by a drag was whacked in with a hoe. We had wagons, a two-seated carraige with a tow, and a buggy with two seats. Neither had springs. We also had a two-seated high back sleigh.

The brook that ran through the meadow was a great brook for trout which afforded us boys great sport in fishing for them. Near the head of the brook was a dam that enclosed a large pond, which gave power to run a saw mill. Here the farmers got their lumber sawed, some of which they sold. The pond was a splendid place for bathing when we boys came around cross lots from school. Just below the dam was a place where the farmers used to wash their sheep before shearing. The only time I went farther than the center to town was on the fourth of July, the first day a passenger train crossed the Connecticut River at Springfield. Trains ran as far as Chester Factories, father gave me ten cents to spend and I never had a better fourth of July.

There was one thing which we did not have much of, and that was money. Eggs sold at 12 cents a dozen, butter at the

same price per pound. Wool was taken to the carding machine, made into rolls, and spun on the spinning wheel. I hardly ever see an electric car pass now, but I am reminded of the buzzing of that old wheel. The yarn was sent to the fulling mill and made into cloth. Then it was made into garments at home. The flannels were woven in the house. Not all the wool was used in this way. I think we got more ready money from wool sold than from any other crop.

The writer's old home is occupied by a grandson of Moses Lyman. One day last August we visited the old home, found the place well kept, withs some great improvements. Looking up and down the street, we saw the same road, the same stone walls, the brook now without the trout, many of the same trees, but of the playmates of childhood, not one was there.



Universal Shortcake. — Two quarts of flour; two tablespoonfuls lard; three tablespoonfuls of butter; two and one-half cups sour or buttermilk, "Loppered"\*\* cream is better; two eggs well beaten; one teaspoonful soda, dissolved in hot water; one teaspoonful salt. Chop up the shortening in the salted flour, as for pastry. Add the eggs and soda to the milk; put all together, handling as little as may be. Roll lightly and quickly into two sheets, the one intended for the upper crust fully half an inch thick, the lower less than this. Lay the butter smoothly in a well-greased baking pan, strew it thickly with raspberries, blackberries, or what is better yet, huckleberries, sprinkle four or five tablespoons of sugar over these, cover with the thicker crust, and bake from twenty to twenty-five minutes, until nicely browned, but not dried. Eat hot for breakfast with butter and powdered sugar. If sweet milk be used, add two teaspoons cream-tartar sifted into the dry flour. It should be mixed as soft as can be rolled. This shortcake is very nice made with the common "black caps" or wild raspberries.

\*curdled.

Ransom's Family Receipt Book — 1888



## MAXIMS FOR WIVES

Excerpted from **Use and Abuse**  
by Ella S. Chipman

The following maxims are worthy of more than a hasty reading. Husbands should not pass them by, for they are designed for wives, and wives should not despise them for they are addressed to husbands.

1. The nearest approach to domestic happiness on earth is the cultivation on both sides of absolute unselfishness.
2. Never both be angry at once.
3. Never talk at one another, either alone or in company.
4. Never shout at one another unless the house is on fire.
5. Let each one strive to yield oftenest to the wishes of the other.
6. Let self-denial be the daily aim and practice of each.
7. Never find fault unless it is perfectly certain that a fault has been committed, and always speak lovingly.
8. Never taunt with a past mistake.
9. Never allow a request to be repeated.
10. Neglect the whole world, rather than one another.
11. Never make a remark at the expense of the other — it is a meanness.
12. Never meet without a loving welcome.
13. Never part for a day without loving words to think of during absence.
14. Never let the sun go down upon any anger or grievance.
15. Never let any thought you have committed go by until you have frankly confessed it and asked forgiveness.
16. Never forget the happy hours of early love.
17. Never sigh over what might have been, but make the best of what is.
18. Never forget that marriage is ordained of God, and that His blessing alone can make it what it should ever be.
19. Never be contented till you know that you are both walking in the narrow way.
20. Never let your hopes stop short of the eternal home.

# TWENTY YEARS OF THE WESTFIELD RIVER

by Alexander Forbes

excerpts from an article published in the Appalachian  
Mountain Club Bulletin, January 1937

Back in the days which are prehistoric to most canoeists of today — the first decade and a half of this century — a band of enthusiasts made frequent runs down many New England rivers and became expert at handling difficult water. But though these early sportsmen had tried the west branch of the Westfield (what you see from B & A Railroad above Huntington), the east or north branch remained undiscovered until 1914. Once tried, its lure enticed us year after year; and some of us declared it was the finest run in all New England. My own initiation into this band, as a late comer, was coincident with the christening of the Westfield as a canoeing run. I had long craved to try quick-water. One man who canoed with the old-timers told me solemnly that quick-water canoeing was no game for a married man.

In April 1914 I learned that a big party was running the Westfield on the 19th and 20th, and that I could borrow a canoe and join them. This river had never been run (by white people) but some of the party had looked it over. After years of experimenting with both double and single canoes, these men had nearly all adopted the single as their choice; only two of the party were running double that year. Two

or three went ahead of the others to get the canoes transported from the express office at Williamsburg to the river bank at Cummington. The rest of us took the train from Boston to Northampton and the trolley car from here to Williamsburg, where we spent the night at the hotel. This was in the early days of automobiles when they had scarcely penetrated the hill country. The only conveyance to the river was the two-horse mountain wagon.

Early in the bright spring morning we piled into two of these vehicles and set out on the long trek to Cummington. Lumbering along over the muddy road we had plenty of time to admire the scenery before we arrived, about 9 o'clock, at Cummington. There the party assembled ten in all and soon in nine canoes we were bobbing merrily down the river.

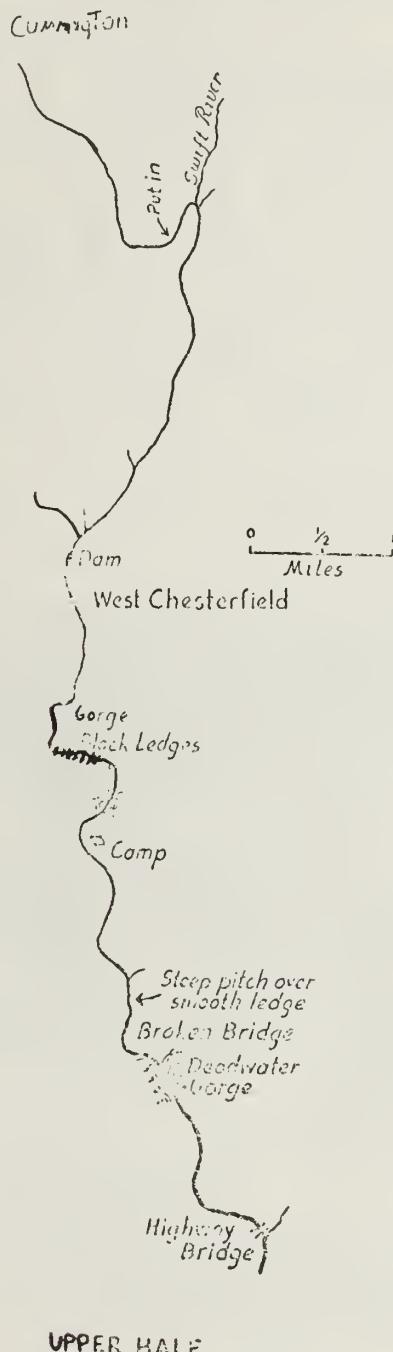
There had been heavy rains and the river was high, very high. The running was fast and easy as far as Swift River. For that distance the road follows close to the river bank, and all of the populace who could find vehicles drove along beside us watching our progress. In addition there was a hearse keeping scrupulously abreast of our flotilla. To those of us who viewed the foaming current with some terror this seemed a most considerate bit of preparedness.

At Swift River the scene changed. Here the Westfield turns sharply, almost doubling back on itself, and plunges down through a wild, steepsided valley in a succession of rough and rapid pitches beset with countless boulders. Not many minutes after rounding the bend, we shot down an extra heavy pitch into a deep pool. Just ahead of me, Lincoln, striking a turbulent haystack (heavy-standing wave-Ed.) capsized and swam for the bank. I braced myself but to no avail. The rotary whirl of the haystack threw me over as quickly as it had him, and swimming to the shady bank where stood a great block of ice, I learned how cold the water was. At

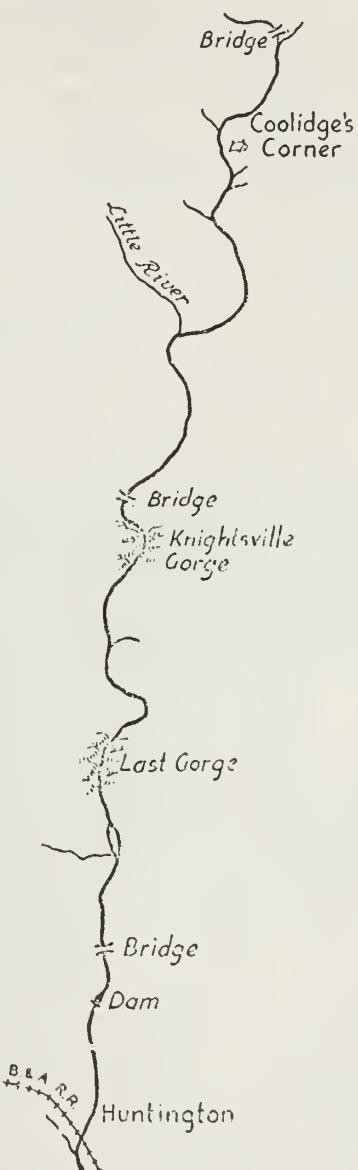
the next bend another canoe dived right into a haystack and went under. All three canoes were brought ashore and we stopped for lunch.

We had only gone half a mile from Swift River, and the next three miles to West Chesterfield proved long ones with

heavy pitches (steep drops-Ed.) at the bends which called for careful manoeuvering. There are entering brooks whose foaming white cascades, tumbling out of the hemlocks over the sheer rocks right into the river, left an indelible impression as we sped past.



UPPER HALF



LOWER HALF

Diagram of the Westfield River

It was four o'clock when we reached a meadow just below the little town of West Chesterfield, and the wisest heads counseled camping there for the night. My iron nerve was quite rusted away by the immersion and riotous ride over the turbulent waves, and in my little tent my dreams were a feverish succession of mad rapids and cascades tumbling into abysses where no boat could survive the terminal crash.

The axe of an old-timer cutting firewood for breakfast roused me from my nightmares in the gray dawn; and soon we were on the river again. Arriving at the West Chesterfield Gorge, the most imposing in Massachusetts, we found the water pouring through so heavily that we did not attempt to run it. We carried it around by the wood road on the right, and at the next bend just below the gorge, where the river drops sharply over smooth black ledges of bedrock, the water was so heavy as to be clearly dangerous. Evidently we could carry past that pitch more easily on the left side; so we put in and paddled across in the easy water above the pitch. Shoving out into a swift current, one must lean downstream to balance the thrust of the current. The occupants of the double canoe didn't lean enough and capsized. Swimming hard they made the bank only just above the heavy water. They were in real danger, which goes to show that the Westfield in high water is a river to be treated with respect. The canoe ran the pitch bottom up but was recovered, battered but still usable some distance downstream.

Half a mile or so below the ledges we came to a group of giant boulders through which the river roared in a few narrow chutes. Again we carried around, up the steep bank and through the dense thicket to the foot of the boulder patch. From here the running was easier and we made fast time down the river, scarcely stopping for

lunch in the rain till we reached the Knightville Gorge: in existence before the dam was built-Ed.). Here we carried over the hill to the right, put in the river again, and ran down to the last gorge above Huntington. This time we carried over the hill on the left, and a tough carry it was. Late in the afternoon we pulled into Huntington, a tired party.

The next year, 1915, the 19th of April was again conveniently placed on a weekend. Being far more at home in a kayak than a canoe, I was convinced that I could have managed the turbulent haystacks of 1914 in such a craft, partly because of the deck which sheds water, but chiefly because of the stability due to sitting on the bottom. Consequently I designed a kayak similar to the Alaska Eskimo model, but with a flatter bottom for stability, a fuller spoon bow for buoyancy in entering white water, and a larger cockpit to expedite jumping out in case of capsizing or jamming on a rock. The kayak had initiation on the Westfield River in the expedition of 1915. The water was about two feet lower than the previous April. This made slow and bony going but removed all hazard. We carried around the West Chesterfield Gorge but most of us ran the pitch over the black ledge and the chute through the boulder patch and found them lively and entertaining. We camped for the night on the flat meadow dotted with birch and hemlock just below the big boulder. The upper end of this meadow later became our regular campsite and was the scene of many a genial gathering around the campfire in later years.

The kayak proved excellent in heavywater, going easily through haystacks which would swamp an open boat, but on shallow water with tortuous courses through the rocks, she was not as easy to control as a canoe with a pole. Still with a combination pole-paddle, a double-ended pole flared out into a blade at each end,

she worked well enough in all kinds of going.

From our own observation on subsequent trips and from the reports of residents we learned that the Westfield River, because of the steepness of the valley slopes and the steepness of its own descent, rises rapidly after a rain and soon falls again to low water level.

After 1915 there was a hiatus (World War I-Ed.) but on April 19, 1919 five of us enjoyed the finest run yet. The weather and water were perfect, so that we ran nearly three miles beyond our 1915 camping place before stopping for the night. Here, where the valley had become wider than in the steep-sided West Chesterfield region, the river drops down in a spirited but easy riffle and then turns sharply to the left around a jutting promontory of steep rocks, surmounted in those days by a fine stand of hemlock. Just below the bend we found a charming

campsites which we used often. From there it was an easy run to Huntington on the second day.

In 1922 a party of nine made the run. On this trip Raymond Emerson in his kayak made an innovation by running the entire West Chesterfield Gorge, the first time it was ever done. The open boats still shied away from the place, but after seeing how well his kayak took it, two more of us in kayaks ran the gorge and found it most interesting.

In 1923 below the West Chesterfield Gorge, one canoeist got his canoe rammed on a rock athwart the current, so that the combined strength of all available hands could not dislodge it. He extricated his packs and spent the night in Mr. Thayer's house by the gorge, and abandoned the rest of the trip.

In 1924 we encountered the highest water we had seen yet. Two newcomers in a double canoe were cautioned to keep close



Photograph by Bruce McMillan

to the shore, but with rocks to dodge at high speed, that is easier said than done. Barely a quarter of a mile from the start I saw them disappear from view in the tumultuous white water. Following some fifty yards behind I soon came on them crawling out on the bank, while the abandoned canoe went on down the river at a terrific speed. I was glad to lighten the load of my kayak of my cooking gear and food supply. They built a fire to dry out and agreed to walk down to West Chesterfield carrying the small pack, there to meet me for lunch.

The others had gone ahead, and following them in my kayak I presently came on the remains of a canoe draped over a rock in mid-stream. It turned out that Wendell had dived under a mighty haystack at the very point E.H. George had gone under ten years before, and after an uncomfortable period trying to get his head above the frothy water he had swam ashore minus his canoe. The sequel to that was the most sporting event of the day. Wendell's pack came clear of his canoe and started floating down the river. Emerson, close by in his kayak, gave chase. The going was very heavy and he had to look sharp to avoid being dangerously wrecked on numerous boulders. But he kept on. For a mile and a half the chase went on. Following as fast as I dared I made slow time, for though the decked kayak was in her element in heavy water, the river was so full that it seemed prudent to keep near the bank in the heavier stretches. More than half way down to West Chesterfield I came on Emerson resting after his wild chase, with the runaway pack, defeated at last, sitting on the bank beside him. I marveled that he could have kept up the pursuit all that distance without swamping and won the race into the bargain.

Grinnel and Querido, had already arrived, and of all the tantalizing experiences I ever knew theirs reached the

highwater mark. They had found their canoe hung up on the dam, but out of reach from the bank. Old Mr. Higgins, the Good Samaritan of West Chesterfield, had rallied round with a pole for a boat hook, but it wasn't quite long enough to reach the canoe. Just as they were lashing it on to another stick the canoe slipped over the dam and started on. Mr. Higgins led the chase and commandeered an automobile in the village. Two men followed running down the bank, while a third in the car tried to head off the canoe at the bend above the gorge. But for all their efforts the canoe made good her escape, carrying all the spare clothes and camping gear they had brought.

Mr. Higgins, overcome with compassion and determined that West Chesterfield should set a high standard of hospitality to the stricken, insisted on setting us up to lunch at the village store. Leaving my kayak to be sent home, I traveled with my shipwrecked companions by bus to Huntington where we spent the night in the hotel.

In 1927 an innovation occurred. Tom Cabot and George Sturgis, with their wives also, ran the river in double canoes, the first time any women had attempted this run. The water was the lowest we had seen yet and our progress slow and difficult. Where the river widens, in the region known as Indian Hollow, it is very shallow in low water. This was bad enough for the canoes, but worse for a kayak which with narrower beam draws more water. My kayak built in 1920 and much battered since was resembling a sieve even at the start, and as I waded down the shallows dragging it over the pebbles, the aged canvas became rapidly more permeable till I was forced to stop every few minutes to dump the heavy load of water. This left me far behind, and when quite fagged out I arrived at Huntington late in the afternoon and exhibited the strained and disintegrating derelict to my comrades.

they shook their heads and I shook mine and told the station agent he could have her. So in 1928 I acquired a new kayak.

In 1929 we went in on May 4th. We felt that pleasant weather was better than high water, and so chose May instead of April. Emerson had acquired a new canoe, but when he reached the river-bank where the canoes had been delivered by truck the night before, his canoe had been stolen. Inquiry revealed that people down the road had seen a truck speeding away with it. The State Police were summoned but the canoe was never traced.

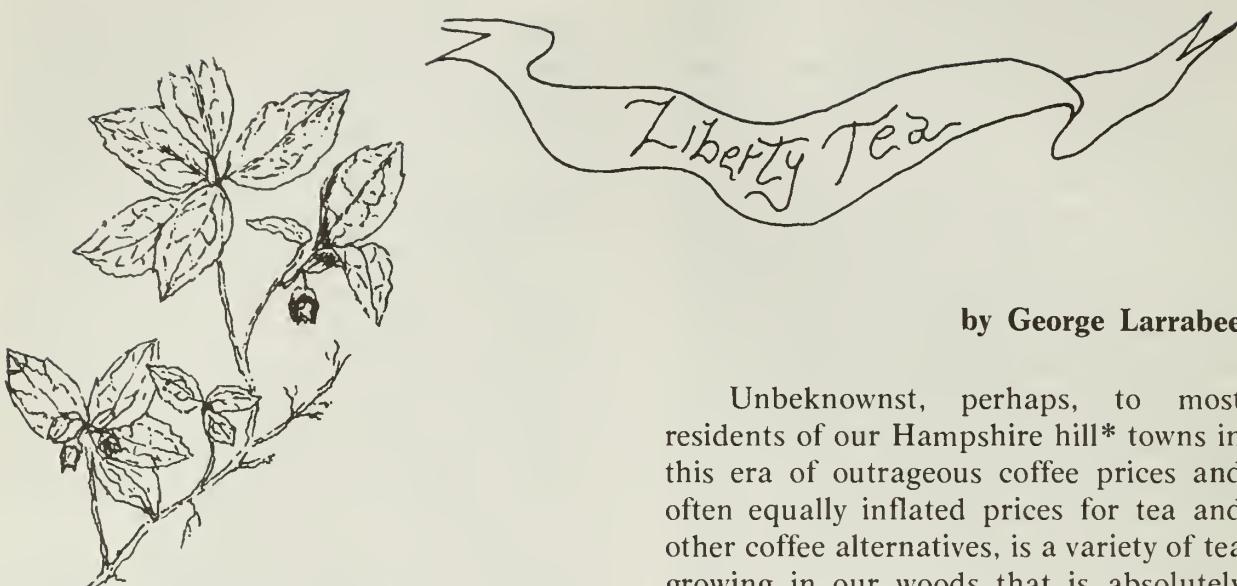
Our coming when we did that year proved providential. To our horror we saw a lumber gang at work in the woods hard by the head of the gorge, constructing a bridge across it on the site of the old Boston and Albany post-road bridge. Inquiry revealed that they were planning to strip the entire east side of the gorge where pines and hemlocks nearly a hundred feet high, standing on the very edge of the cliff, render this the most striking bit of natural scenery in Massachusetts. Immediately on our return to Boston we got in touch with the Standing Committee of the Trustees of Public Reservations. A long-distance telephone call to Westfield halted the cutting one day before the slope was to have been striped to the edge of the cliff. In a few days negotiations had resulted in the purchase of the land and its transfer to the Trustees of Public Reservations, who will hold it henceforth inviolate. In 1930 when we arrived at the gorge the lumbermen's bridge had just been taken down, and the traces of their lumbering operations were fast disappearing.

In 1933 we ran the river in two doubles and my kayak on May 6 and 7. The water was low, and Emerson lightening one of the doubles of its load ran the whole West Chesterfield Gorge, using a rope from the bank to steady him in the first pitch but unaided the rest of the way. This I believe was the first time the gorge was attempted in anything but a kayak. On the second day, at the end of that last gorge a mile and a half above Huntington, close to the right bank is a steep pitch ending in a high haystack. On a few occasions when the water was not too heavy those of us in kayaks would run this pitch, relying on our decks to keep us afloat, for we would nearly go out of sight in the froth when diving through the haystack. It was taken as a matter of course that the open canoes must be carried around this pitch. On this occasion, Emerson lightening his canoe of all packs, contrived to run this "kayak pitch" in his open canoe, swinging to the left enough to dodge the crest of the haystack and coming through without swamping.

In 1935 two men made a remarkable record in running the river all the way from Swift River to Huntington in a single day. An A.M.C. party ran the river in April 1936, leaving a trail of shattered canoes!

This brings the history of canoeing on the Westfield down to the present time (1937-Ed.) As one runs that river, at each bend a new vista of the valley opens, the canoeist lives in it for a brief time, scanning its forest-clad slopes as he hurries past, then as he rounds the next bend that part of the Valley becomes a memory.

P.S. (ed.) Olive Winn of Russell says that her father, William Lincoln, as a young man well before 1900, used to run the rapids in Russell that existed before the big dam was built. On one occasion in their courting days he took her mother, Mary Gibbs, along for the exciting ride. Mary Gibbs must have had great faith in her swain and evidently found the ride even more thrilling than she expected. She later remarked that she couldn't swim a stroke so thank heavens there was no accident! Olive thinks her father may have been the first person to brave those particular rapids.



Wintergreen  
flowers produce the  
Red Checkerberry



New Jersey Tea  
bright red roots  
give the common name  
Redroot

Kristin Jay

Liberty Tea

by George Larrabee

Unbeknownst, perhaps, to most residents of our Hampshire hill\* towns in this era of outrageous coffee prices and often equally inflated prices for tea and other coffee alternatives, is a variety of tea growing in our woods that is absolutely free. Not only is it free for the picking, but it grows here in lavish abundance. Moreover, it is easy to identify and easy to find, rewarding the gatherer at almost any time of the year with tasty berries to boot. Also, unlike the dooryard teas such as spearmint and peppermint, far from having to be dried out to make a good tea, the fresher it is the better it tastes.

What is this excellent plant? It is our native American wintergreen, growing in upland regions from Labrador to Georgia, and from the Atlantic Coast westward into Minnesota. During the American Revolution it was one of the many "liberty teas" used by the colonists as an alternative to the foreign **Thea sinesis** imported by the British. Americans in fact originally became "hooked" on coffee because it was seen as an alternative to taxed domestic East India Company tea, though the outbreak of the war made coffee, also imported, so expensive that there was even a coffee substitute — burnt rye.

\*Our western Connecticut River valley watershed towns being divided between the three counties of Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin, I prefer to lump them all together under the title of "the Hampshire Hills," since the three counties were originally one, Hampshire. The tricounty area is more attractively called the "Old Hampshire region."

Wintergreen is also called "checkerberry," "teaberry," and "mountain tea," the latter two names being highly appropriate to its use and habitat. "Teaberry" indicates that it was much utilized by the poorer settlers, imported tea being too expensive even before George III imposed the tax on it, long before Paul Revere or Sam Adams were ever born. "Mountain tea" gives you an idea of where to look for it, as it is often found in rocky, hemlock or pine-shaded areas in close proximity to mountain laurel. In fact the shiny small green leaves rather closely resemble mountain laurel leaves, appearing to be immature laurel leaves still hugging the ground. An experimental bite into one, however, will quickly disabuse you of the notion that they are baby laurel leaves. If their bright red berries are visible (often they are not) you will know the difference at a glance.

Other liberty teas were Oswego tea, New Jersey tea, Labrador tea (the latter appellation applied to two evergreen shrubs), colts foot, sweet fern, and loosestrife, the last mentioned being a four-leaf aquatic plant bearing pink or lavender flowers. Loosestrife was the wild teas most favored by the Sons of Liberty, since it grew in every of the thirteen colonies. Later it was found to be growing on the Pacific Coast as well. But wintergreen was undoubtedly the most popular liberty tea in appalachian New England, being more abundant and easier to find here. I have seen patches of it on our hills that are scattered over acres.

Also, as its name indicates, wintergreen is an evergreen (though not a conifer) that remains green even in the dead of winter. Even the berries remain plump, red, and tasty beneath the snow. The snow acts to refrigerate (as opposed to freeze) the plant, keeping the berries fresh, though the leaves, may turn a bit purplish from the cold.



Kristin Jay

If you do any outdoor camping in the winter, you can make liberty tea from leaves only a few feet away.

Of course, you can't pick wintergreen that is hidden beneath the snow if you don't know it's there. Therefore you have to note the location of teaberry patches before the snow falls. It then is an easy matter to dig away the snow with the toe of your snowshoe. If the brook you had planned to get water from is located beneath thick ice, melted snow-water will do fine.

Don't try to find wintergreen beneath the snow if you don't know for sure that it is there. I have wasted valuable daylight (considering how early the sun sets in the winter) digging up snow in futile search for wintergreen in "likely" places — plenty of hemlock, pine, laurel and glacial rock, but alas, no mountain tea.

When you boil wintergreen tea (put a minimum of 30 leaves in the pot), don't make the mistake of sweetening it too much with honey or sugar, as it must be thoroughly boiled to bring out the **full** wintergreen taste. When the water turns yellow you can taste the flavor, but it is strongest when the color turns a robust **red**. In the meanwhile, since this takes a lot of boiling, you are in danger of boiling most of the tea away in the form of steam, even with a cover on the pot. Sweetened, all that will be left will be honey-water or sugar-water, the wintergreen taste being completely obscured.

A safe way to pre-sweeten wintergreen tea is to use sugar-maple sap direct from the tree. But in Massachusetts this can be done only during the month of March, generally speaking.

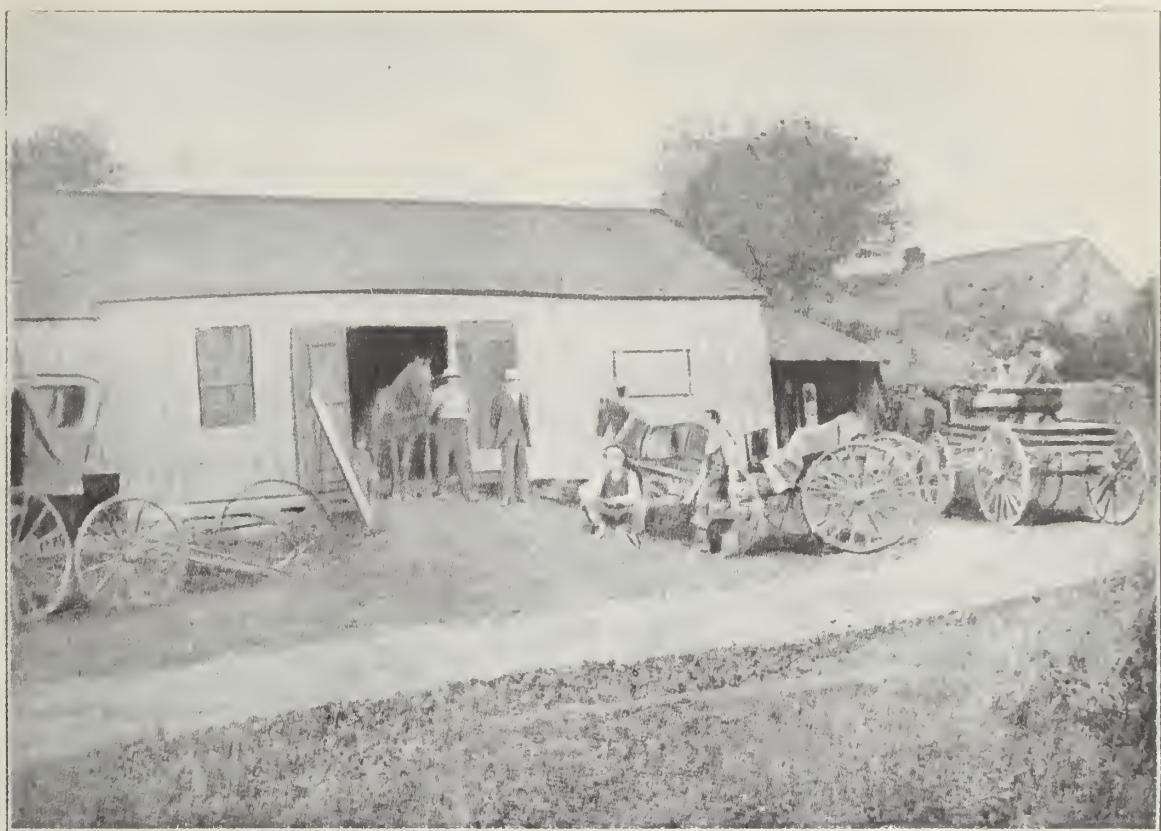
When going out camping any other time of the year, another good practice is to pick wintergreen leaves from the first patch that you come across (if you are going to camp where you have never camped before), rather than wasting valuable time looking for some when you

get there. Just the other day (April 19th) I donned my tricorn hat and homespun smock and hefted my musket and gear to have supper in the woods, intending to camp on heights near the Huntington-Chester line overlooking the Long Branch river. On the way up the slopes I found a thick patch of glossy wintergreen, and, not even bothering to take out a paper bag, simply stuffed the leaves on top of my cartridges in my cartouche box. It turned out to be a lucky thing, because when I reached my goal on the other side of the cliffs, the area had been cut over by lumbering. Though there were still suitable camping spots (snug hemlock stands), the water I had been counting on for cooking had been polluted by the hauling rigs. I was therefore forced to retrace my steps to a spot I had passed on the way uphill where there was pure water. But no wintergreen, and the swiftly gathering gloom prohibited a search for any.

While wintergreen is the most abundant of our New England liberty tea plants, always take advantage of it when you can, because, like the police, it might not "be around when you want it."



Wintergreen leaves in snow  
Photograph by George Laraabee



THE OLD BLACKSMITH'S SHOP

Left to right: Frankie Wyman, Enos W. Boise, leading horse out of shop, Truman Blair, Frank Wyman, the blacksmith, William Wyman, in wagon, Ruth Knox and Reuben Knox.

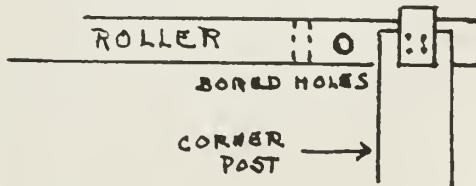
## SHOEING CATTLE

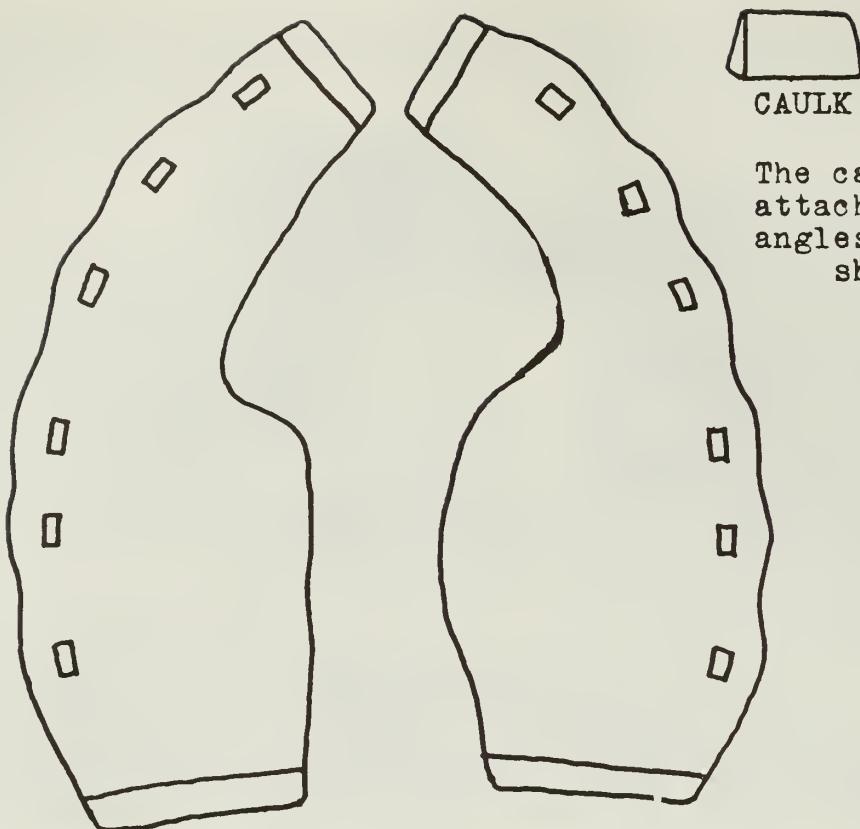
Described by Percy Wyman 11-2-1967  
Contributed by Doris Hayden

Has anyone ever told you of the way cattle were shoed in the good old days? And all the work you had to do before you started and got through?

The ox frame was built by my grandfather years ago of strong timbers and well braced. The four posts were about ten inches square and about five feet high. They were grooved at the top and an eight inch timber, or roller, ran the length of the frame, rounded to fit into the groove and held down by an iron strap so it would not

lift out. In this lengthwise piece, two holes, two inches in diameter, were bored in opposite directions just inside each post, so by inserting a strong stick and turning, it would make a hoist. You could get a





ONE PAIR OX SHOES

quarter turn each time. These rounded timbers were on each side of the frame, which was well braced inside and outside. the floor was planked to make a firm foundation. A stanchion was placed in front for the ox's head to go through. This could be locked to hold the head securely. The whole frame was about two and a half feet wide — enough so the ox could enter but with little to spare. On each side was a long pole fastened about sixteen inches above the floor, which ran back a way. The ox's feet were placed on these poles being raised off the floor.

After the ox was in the stall and the stanchion locked tight, a cross piece was placed behind him to hold him just right. Then an apron of webbing about three feet each away was placed under his stomach and ribs so he could be lifted. The apron had straps of doubled leather with rings at

each end. Four chains with hooks were attached to the rollers. After the apron had been placed and the hooks hitched into the rings, the time for lifting had come. It took almost always eight men to lift the ox off the floor by inserting a stick into each bored hole. Each gave the roller a quarter turn at the same time so as to lift the ox straight at every turn. Some oxen made an awful fuss until they were rarised high enough so their feet would not touch the floor. Then they would give up and not bother any more.

We would raise them up until the bottom of the knees came to the top of the pole that ran lengthwise, then we locked the stick in order to hold them at the right height. Then each leg was tied securely to the pole. The hind legs would be pulled out back on the extended part.

After that father and Uncle Bill took off the old shoes all around, and each took a foot and pared it down if needed. Then found the right size shoe to be fitted. Father used a rasp to make the bottom of the foot smooth, while Uncle Bill began preparing the shoes. After the shoes were heated, they would try them on, maybe burning the hoof a little to make them tight. There were two shoes for each foot as it is in two parts. When one shoe was ready, they started nailing, one keeping just keeping ahead of the other so as not to be in the way — one fitting and the other nailing. Ox shoes came in many sizes, for

the difference in the feet was quite surprising.

I don't remember how long it took to shoe an ox but I have seen seven or eight pair waiting. On stormy days, it seemed they came from everywhere. Father most always helped share the work with Uncle Bill. We boys had to help raise the oxen up and lower them down.

I've watched them shod many times but it's quite hard to remember the details after such a long time. I never understood how a pair of oxen with a wooden yoke could draw so much without breaking their necks.

Notes:

Grandfather —

Horatio Wyman, the first to come to Blandford, who built the blacksmith shop on Birch Hill Road.

Father —

Ely Wyman

Uncle Bill —

William Wyman sons of Horatio Wyman

Percy wyman —

sons of Ely Wyman, born Nov. 10, 1889. Was 78 years of age when he wrote about shoeing oxen.

*What of landscapes?  
That old barn down the road,  
near the corner stone where the three  
townships meet: Worthington,  
Peru, and Cummington, that barn  
where we found dried snakeskins  
and looked for live ones.*

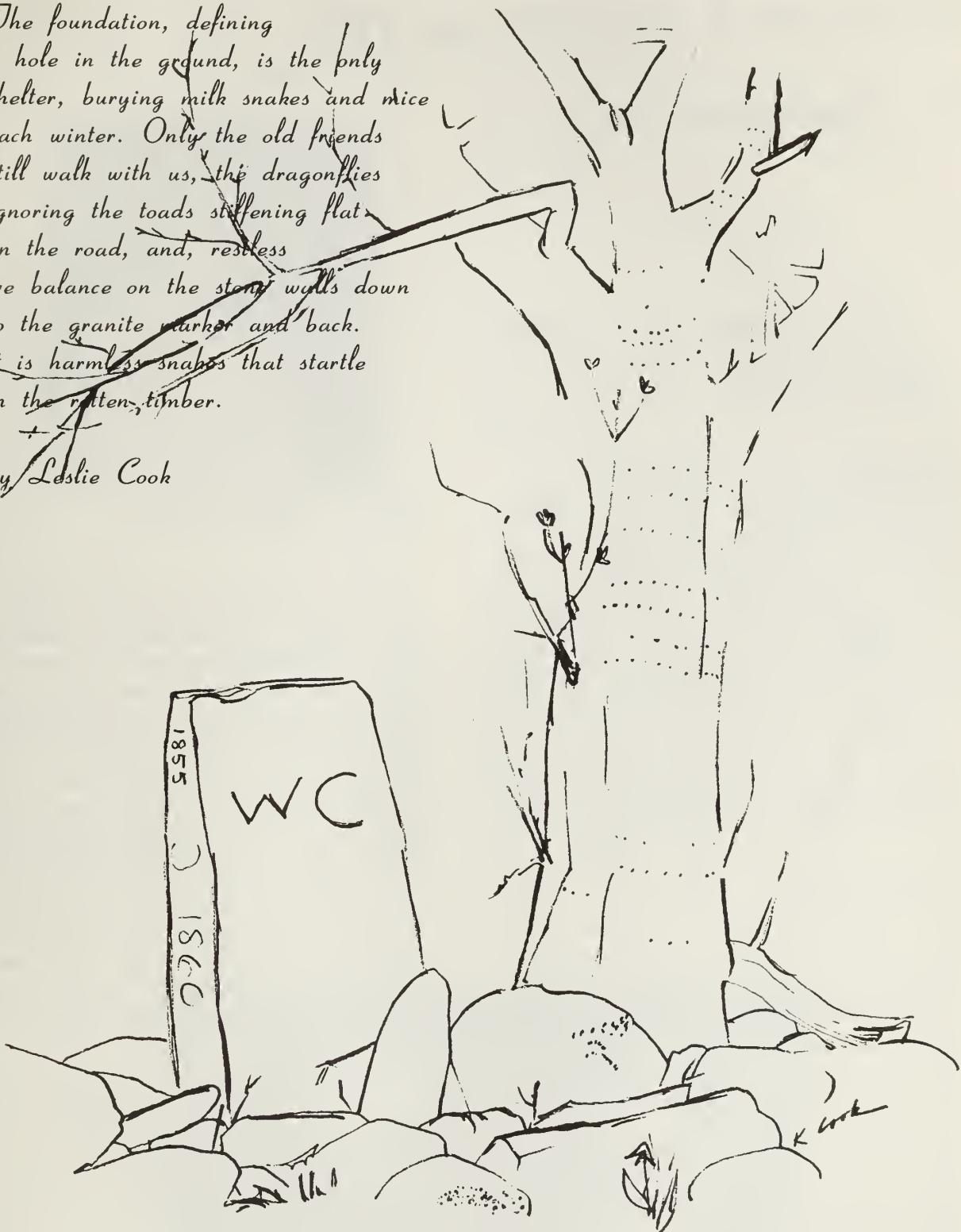
*Where we found rotting squirrels  
and brittle raccoon skulls, empty  
cow stalls and 1940 license plates, always  
expecting bats crouched  
in the dark beams, daring  
the dead wood to crack under  
our weight when we climbed up  
to the loft, eyes wide open.*

*Once, an old man lived nearby,  
kept the tools he tilled surrounding  
fields with in a shed across the road;  
kept horses and stored hay here  
in this barn; set each stone  
of its foundation and others  
by hand; raised the roof  
on the then batless handhewn beams.*

*New owners, to make room for lots,  
and valuing old barn boards more  
than old barns and animal ghosts,  
tore the siding off, piece by piece  
into a pick-up and drove out  
the dirt road, leaving the frame,  
the structure, the form,  
to collapse under an unfamiliar  
open sky.*

The foundation, defining  
a hole in the ground, is the only  
shelter, burying milk snakes and mice  
each winter. Only the old friends  
still walk with us, the dragonflies  
ignoring the toads stiffening flat  
on the road, and, restless  
we balance on the stone walls down  
to the granite marker and back.  
~~It is harmless snakes that startle~~  
~~in the rotten, timber.~~

by Leslie Cook



Drawing by Karin Cook

# FLORENCE BERRY BATES

## An Appreciation

by Carl S. Joslyn

Many of us dream, in our younger years, of something we would like to accomplish during our lifetimes. Not so many of us are fortunate enough to see that dream become a reality. Florence Berry Bates is one of those fortunate few. What she dreamed about was better medical care for people living in the hilltowns of Hampshire County. The realization of her dream can be seen in the services provided at the Medical Center in Worthington. It seems fitting that a few words be said in appreciation of this remarkable woman.

Florence Bates is not a native of Worthington. She first came to the town in 1930 when she was appointed Red Cross nurse serving half a dozen hilltowns in Western Massachusetts. Old timers remember her best for the help she gave them when they were in trouble: when some one in the family was hurt by an accident, was stricken by a sudden illness, or became terminally ill. During her many years of service Florence gave to the people of this area nursing care of the highest quality. She was on duty literally twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Many a time she would get up in the middle of the night to answer a call for help from a family frightened by a sudden illness. She had no "answering service". If you called her on the telephone, she would answer the call herself, and if she felt you needed her help, she would come to your home at once. That was all she wanted to know: does that person need my help?



*Florence Berry Bates*

One example of this extraordinary service comes to mind. Many years ago, on a hot summer afternoon, a group of Worthington boys went for a swim in Kilburn Brook. As this story opens, a thunderstorm was threatening, and the boys were hurrying into their clothes. They had waited just a bit too long. Simultaneous with a deafening clap of thunder, a bolt of lightning struck a tree next to which one of the boys was sitting. The force of the lightning tore off his shoes, fused the zipper on his jacket, and knocked him unconscious. He was in a state of shock and the front of his body was badly burned.

Florence Bates was called to give first aid to this seven year old youngster. She worked on him for several hours, never giving up hope, until he came out of shock and regained consciousness. If you wonder where this boy is today, walk into the Worthington post office and ask to see the Postmaster. The man who will answer your summons — Cullen S. Packard — is the self-same person who was pulled back from a brush with death by Florence Bates many years ago.

Florence never shirked an unpleasant task or dodged a case thought to be hopeless. Some doctors simply refuse accident cases; they are unpleasant and are notoriously poor payers. Other doctors try to get out of treating terminal cases. Not so Florence Bates. I have known her to get up from a meeting at the Medical Center, when her own health was none too good, to give first aid to a man injured in an automobile accident. She was probably never paid for this service. Instead of ducking terminal cases, she took them into her home, gave them the best of nursing care, and made their last days on earth as cheerful and comfortable as possible. She did this for pay, it is true, but the pay was small and the work was hard. All that mattered to Florence was: does this person need my help?

The crowning achievement of her career was the establishment, in 1950, of the Health Center on Buffington Hill Road. This later developed into the Medical Center as we know it today, with offices for two physicians, a full-time dentist, and a part-time optometrist. Florence Bates' dream is now reality. Many other persons, of course, have contributed to the success of the Medical

Center: some through the gift of money, other through the gift of professional services, and still others through the gift of plain, ordinary hard work. But the fact remains that the driving force behind this project, the force that has kept it going in good times and bad, was provided by Florence Bates.

Several years ago Florence read to me a favorite quotation of hers, and asked me if I knew who wrote it. I had to tell her I did not, but would like to have a copy of it since it struck me as something that might have been written by Florence herself. Here it is:

"As we look backward, those times in our lives which grow brightest, seem most worthwhile, are by no means those in which we have been happiest or most successful, but rather those in which though painful and even sorrowful, we have been most necessary, most desired. To be needed in other human lives — is there anything greater or more beautiful in this world?" That is what Florence Bates believes, one of the truths by which she has lived: that there is nothing greater or more beautiful in all this world than to be needed in the lives of others.



*Florence Bates and the car which was a gift from the Town July 30, 1953*

# BALL IRON PIPE BRIDGES

by Bernard Drew

Hen's teeth are more scarce than Ball Iron Pipe Bridges. Almost.

Four of the bridges still carry traffic in Windsor, Dalton, Cummington, and Hinsdale — reminders of an innovative man and a once-thriving village.

Ball bridges are recognizable by their iron pipe framework, which spans the waterway. Suspended from this are I-beams, which carry planks and support the roadbed. Rods and reinforcements are fixed in triangular patterns, for strength.

The bridges were designed and manufactured by Charles H. Ball in East Windsor in the 1890's. At that time, Windsor was a rural community possessing a number of farms and supporting several sawmills, gristmills, and other small businesses.

John, Alfred, and Elijah Jordan came to East Windsor in the 1840's, and established the first sawmill in that part of town. John built a machine shop and foundry about 1860. His son, Granville, later entered the business and eventually became associated with Charles Ball in the manufacture of iron bridges.

A pleasant village, East Windsor — known as Jordanville, because of the number of families living there of that name — boasted a store and post office, the machine shop and foundry, a tannery,

a scythe-stone factory operated by Edwin Jordan, a paint shop, two blacksmiths and a cobbler, and about a dozen dwellings. Elijah Jordan and his family operated the Jordan House Tavern, once a stagecoach stop on the route between Boston and Albany.

John Jordan manufactured turbine water wheels of his own invention, and also bench screws, hand vises, circular and band sawmills and various types of wood-working machines. Charles Ball became a partner in this operation sometime in the 1880's.

Ball was born in 1861, the son of William and Mary (Pierce) Ball. He grew up on the "Willey Place," a short distance outside of East Windsor village on the road to Peru.

Ball worked for a number of years as a mechanical engineer with the Stevens Manufacturing Co. of Cummington. The factory at that time made wooden brush handles and pencils.

When Ball and his wife, the former Cora Jenkins of Cummington, moved to East Windsor they took up residence just west of the four corners, on what is now Old Route 9. (The house still stands, abandoned.) The machine shop was nearby, on "South Street" (now Worthington Road.)



*Ball Bridge on Windsor Bush Road, Windsor*

*Photograph by Bernard Drew, Windsor*

Ball expanded the machine shop in 1888 for the purpose of manufacturing bridges. It is not known how Ball came to design the iron pipe bridge, but they were advertised as the cheapest and strongest iron bridges in the world. They were patented in July, 1893.

Charlie Ball's brother Frank and Harrison ("A be") Hathaway were employed in the manufacture of the bridges, as was, for a time, Granville Jordan. Jordan later moved to Dalton and established a machine shop there.

It was common practice at that time for communities to purchase ready-made single-lane bridges for use on town roads, and Charlie Ball's salesmanship was sufficient to entice Windsor and other hill towns to buy several of his structures in 1893 and '94.

A Ball bridge was erected in Windsor's Allenville section (along River Road) in 1893. The selectmen justified the bridge's \$200 cost in that year's town report: "...It will be seen by this report

that the cost of our Highways and Bridges have very materially exceeded our appropriations. Unexpectedly we found it necessary to build a new bridge near the Allen place: we thought it a matter of economy to build of iron, as it is not expedient to procure timber at the present, as it will last but a few years..." This bridge no longer exists; it apparently was destroyed by the flood of 1938.

The Ball bridge on Windsor Bush Road in town is still used today. It was purchased in 1894, also for \$200. The bridge, now painted orange, is located at the edge of a meadow, near an old sugarhouse.

Henry Estes, long-time Windsor resident and former proprietor of the town's general store, recalls working with the town's road crew years ago when they constructed a new abutment for this bridge. He recalls, too, dismantling one of the Ball bridges: "The nuts came off as easy as could be when you put the wrench to them. I don't know what kind of oil Charlie Ball used, but it sure lasted."



*Ball Bridge of Bullard's Crossing, Hinsdale*  
Drawing by Bernard Drew, Windsor

The Windsor bridge has a railing along one side, and the pipes are of 18-inch circumference. The very similar structure on Bullard's Crossing in Hinsdale lacks this accessory, and the pipe is larger, of 21-inch circumference. The Dalton and Cummington bridges, too, employ the larger pipe.

The Hinsdale bridge is situated in a remote, swampy area, at the source of the east branch of the Housatonic River.

The largest of the existing Ball bridges is on Holiday Road in Dalton, within sight of Route 9. It spans 41 feet, and shows a considerable amount of remedial work done over the years — reinforcing rods, new planks, etc. The

bridge is painted green and sports a plaque, which measure 6-7/8 by 9-7/8 inches and reads:

"Built 1894 by C.H. Ball, East Windsor, Mass. Patented July 25, 1893.  
S.L. Young, F.L. Warren, G.T. Pike,  
Selectmen of Dalton, Mass."

Harold Tilton, Windsor highway superintendent, distinctly recalls seeing a like plate on the Windsor Bush bridge years ago, so it seems certain that each bridge once carried one.

The Dalton 1895 town report discloses the cost of the Holiday Road Bridge:

#### IRON BRIDGE NEAR JAMES SMITH'S

Appropriation	\$750
Paid	
John Dwyer, building abutment,	\$291.81
Geo. L. Cleveland, 160 perch	
stone	200.00
Charles H. Ball, for iron bridge,	386.00
S.L. Young, filling in,	8.00
F.L. Warren, filling in and	
putting up railing.	22.25
	858.06
Exceeded appropriation	108.06



*Ball Bridge on Holiday Road, Dalton*  
Photograph by Bernard Drew, Windsor



*Ball Bridge on Stage Road, Cummington*  
Drawing by Donna Archambault, Housatonic

The Ball bridges were all custom-made. Just the other day (April 19th) I got there. Just the other day (April 19th) I bridge, the railing in Dalton was not standard equipment but added by laborers at the time of erection.

The triangular Cummington bridge varies from the others in shape, but not design. Located in a quiet, wooded spot on Stage Road, this bridge is rusted but in good condition.

The bridge-building business, it seems, while an ambitious undertaking, was not a prosperous one. Charlie Ball

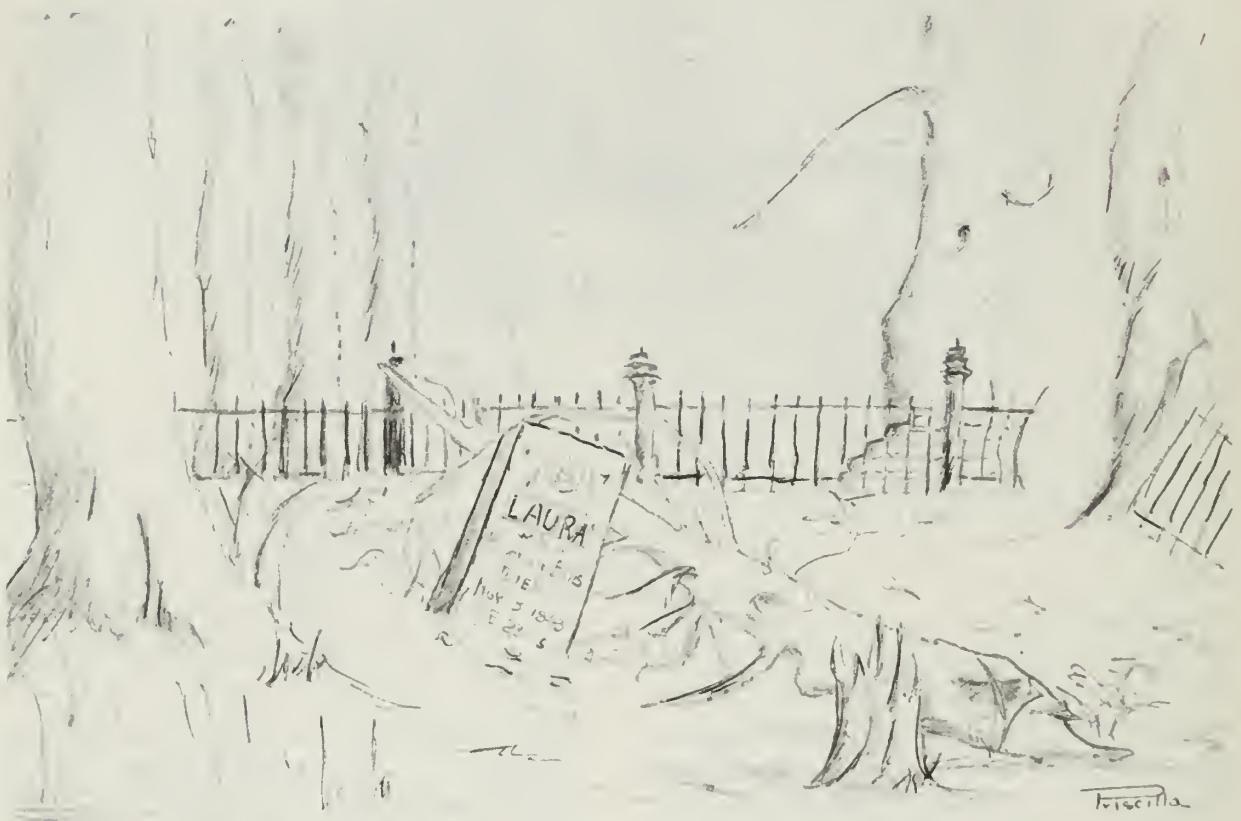
wanted to expand his operation, and his experience with the Stevens factory suggested the route to take. In 1895 he purchased a portable sawmill outfit from someone in Savoy. Ball stopped making bridges and entered the woodworking business. The latter thrived until his death in 1928.

It is not known how many Ball bridges were made, but four survive today — rugged and graceful relics of an industrious man.

####

#### Sources:

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- History of Berkshire County by A. B. Whipple, 1885.
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- Massachusetts Yearbook and Business Directory*, 1899.



*Drawing by Priscilla Sarafin*

## LAURA

by Priscilla Sarafin

As I guess everyone is aware, the family of Henry and Priscilla Sarafin lives on the south end of Ireland Street, in Chesterfield.

Although civilization (?) seems to end in our yard, and only woods for miles beyond us, there still is a road that traces its original way past the front of the house up into the woods, through memories of a settlement that watched the stage go by on its way down into Indian Hollow, and all points toward Boston.

Old foundations along both sides of

the road testify to homes and gardens, and branyards of what must have been a busy community at one time, and at the top of a little rise, set back in the woods there can be found a private cemetery, lovingly enclosed in a wrought iron fence, proudly bearing a brass plate engraved "Consider Cole" attached to its ornate gate.

Inside the enclosure are three or four huge hemlock trees, one of which has broken at ground level, and now lies next to a single headstone bearing the inscription:

LAURA  
wife of  
Ebenezer Ellis  
DIED  
Nov. 15, 1843  
A.E. 23 yrs.

Such a solitary stone, tipped slightly to one side, but still staunchly watching the seasons come and go, hidden away in the woods!

Old cemeteries have always intrigued me, and this one really stirs my imagination, and after having lived here for thirty-five years, my interest has only intensified.

What was she like, as I try to envision. Was her hair dark, was it light? Eyes blue or soft brown? Buxom or tiny, a free spirit or one restricted by the social customs of the day?

Laura was young. Did she die giving life to her son, or was she taken by one of the many afflictions of the time in which she lived?

I have been trying for a number of years to find out why only this grave remains in the wooded plot. There is very little documented evidence to find, though hearsay has it that the others were moved to different cemeteries when the settlement

moved elsewhere, and that Laura, because she had been disowned by her family, was left behind.

The theory could also be considered that she died of smallpox and there was fear of moving her because of contamination. However, as is evident in many old cemeteries, if one died of the disease, there were others, and none of the plot would have been disturbed.

**The History and Genealogy of the Families of Chesterfield**, published in 1962, lists Laura as being the child of Consider Cole, (called Consider Cole, 3rd), and that she "married one Stiles E. Ellis of Norwich, October 7, 1939." "One son, Charles, resided in Manistee, Michigan." No other mention is made of her, her husband, or her son.

During the last few years, sections of the iron fence have been displaced, one by a locust tree growing up through it. The brass plate was removed from the gate when the land was owned by the late Walter Fox, and was seen at one time at his home in Conwell Academy.

I am genuinely interested in finding out the true version of this bit of Chesterfield history. What of her, her family, and the community in which she lived? Do any of you, reading this article, have any knowledge of "Laura": If so, please get in touch.



# SOME MIDDLEFIELD MEMORIES

by Julia Y. Andersen

The name of this magazine reminds me of a valiant neighbor who saved her stone walls from being taken down and used as foundations for the town roads. She was farsighted and realized how much stone walls can add to the New England landscape. Knowing what the road crew intended to do one day, she was prepared when they arrived, and was sitting on her stone wall armed with a gun. After some debate and head scratching the men retired from the scene and those same stone walls of hers are still in use on our main road, a lasting monument to women's lib!

The recent heavy snow and cold recalls a less bucolic episode of some years ago, attested to by those who should know. After being snowed in for some days, a farmer made his way across the fields, no roads yet being opened, to see how his elderly neighbor was getting on. The two men exchanged views on this and that, and as John rose to leave his friend, old Bill remarked, "Could you help me lift something? I can't manage it alone." John readily agreed that he could. "Well," explained Bill, as he led the way to the next room, "My hired man died Friday and he's lying there in the kitchen and it's a mite inconvenient for me. Between us I figure we could move him into another room."

As a member of the minister's family, I heard various tales of his experience here as a young man, before I was born. There was, for instance, the old lady who attended church regularly and heard the new minister sing with the choir and also

preach. She remarked to him, "Well, young man, if your preaching didn't do much good perhaps your singing did." At that time there was a tennis court on the land across from the church and Father and his young brother-in-law were playing there one Saturday. It was a lively game and my uncle returned a swift ball which caught the minister on his Adam's apple, accidentally, I presume. I don't know who preached in church the next day, but it certainly wasn't the voiceless minister. And in later years Father enjoyed telling the tale of how he went to call on one of his parishioners. A small girl came to the door and invited him in, then she left the room to call the lady of the house and returned in a fit of giggles. "She's taking a bath and you just ought to see her."

For many years there was a kindly soul here whose services were much in demand helping the neighbors in many ways: housecleaning, baby-sitting, and so on. It was the season of whooping cough and Lizzie was asked to stay one day with two small children whose parents had to be away for some hours. Both youngsters were still whooping lustily. Lizzie reassured the anxious mother that she would take good care of them. When the parents arrived home, all was serene and the children surprisingly quiet. Much gratified, the mother asked Lizzie how she had seemingly cured them. "Well," explained Lizzie, "I remembered how my mother cured us when we had whooping cough, so I made them a mouse pie. And they liked it!"

# I REMEMBER

by Ruth S. Steins

Watching one or two of the programs on television during the past winter months brought to mind past history and some interesting experiences of years gone by.

Have you ever noticed the telephone switchboard used on **the Waltons**? When I graduated from high school in 1921, there were not many jobs available other than the rag room at the paper mills or something out of town. I didn't want to do either, as my mother needed me to help at home.

I heard that the local telephone agent wanted a part-time operator so I asked to be considered for the job, and was engaged. At that time the Telephone Company engaged an agent and if she was married and keeping a home, they would pay the rent for the house plus a small salary.

The switchboard at the local office was just like the one on the television program. It hung on the wall and had about twenty-five lines plus five trunk lines: two to Westfield, two to Springfield, and one to Huntington. It was in the house on Huntington Road known then as the Brenan House, now long gone. Oh! the conveniences in that house. No running water, just a black pump off the kitchen and a two-holer out back to run to if necessary.

The switchboard was not an electrically operated one except when the paper mill was running. Mr. Folke Becker, owner of the mill at that time, had a special line from the paper mill installed to furnish electricity to the switchboard and it was used while the mill was running, but not on weekends or holidays. Those days we used a crank at the right of the switchboard and connected with a generator in the back yard. This crank was turned at a fairly fast speed with the right hand and the left hand was used to ring the numbers.

After about a year they decided to move to larger quarters and went down on Main Street to the house formerly occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Donald Goodwin. One of the switchboards in the accompanying picture was first used here and was electrically operated.

Later a switchboard was installed in the office at Westfield River Paper Company and I went to work there full time, working at the local office only in an emergency. A new agent took over about then. More phones were installed and more trunk lines out of town added. Another four or five years went by during which I married and started to raise a family so only filled in when no one else was available.

Then the exchange moved over across the street to the house formerly owned by Arnold Harris, but at that time owned by Frank Allen. After two or three years another agent took over. Another switchboard was added to take care of the increase in traffic and the office was known as a two position office.

At the close of the second world war, I went on as a regular operator working full time. Then is when the fun began.

It is interesting to think back and remember things that people expected of the local operators that were totally unconnected with the job. How mad they

would get if you didn't answer their calls when they rang or wondered why you couldn't talk with them for a while because they were lonely.

The exchange made its last move, and went back across the street to the house owned by Mr. Landry, who also operated a grocery store next door. By then there were three full time operators and a spare. The full time operators worked eight hour shifts, six days a week, and the spare worked three days a week.

Here we were in a room by ourselves with a small room in the back for a wash room and a storeroom. We were not supposed to have anyone in there with us so naturally on the afternoon shifts or the night shifts we would either read, do a little hand sewing, or knit. Thus the idea floated around that we were not tending to our business. Sometimes we were reported to the manager in Westfield and consequently got reprimanded.

I took over as agent about 1950 and continued until the system went dial in 1955. I often wonder who does the favors now that they used to do for subscribers, such as:

"I can't find Johnny, will you call Billy's house and see if he is there?"

"My husband is having a bad spell, I've got to be with him. Will you locate Dr. So and So for me?"

"I'm making some relish, how much salt do I put in and how long shall I cook it?"

"I got to go to work at eleven o'clock and am going to take a nap. Please call me and ring till I answer."

A call comes in and you know by the person's voice he is on the verge of collapse. Who calls a neighbor to go and check?

There were several instances that made me a little provoked but I could do nothing about it. One was when the unit to operate the fire siren was put into the office and nothing said to me beforehand.

The first I knew about it was when the local fire chief asked at the local town meeting for an appropriation to cover the cost of the installation. When I asked about it, I was told that the Telephone Company had given permission to install it and all the operators would be instructed in how to operate it. I wish some of those people who accused us of not being on the job, could have been there when that thing went off. We needed four hands and three mouths to answer the calls. Thank goodness there were not too many fires. However, it made extra work for the operator on duty, and no extra pay, and not even a card of thanks from the fire department when we went dial.

I think I have given a little bit of history of the telephone in the village, so I am going to ring off with this question:

Would you like to go back to the "good old days"? Sometimes I think I would.

The following is a list of agents and operators who I think should be mentioned and I hope I haven't missed any.

#### AGENTS

Mrs. Hattie Clark

Mrs. Ida Hall

Mrs. Bernice Sherman

Mrs. Evelyn Barlow

**Mrs. Ruth Steins**

#### OPERATORS

Aldea Patino

Gladys Labombard

Marie Landry

Ethel Feustal

Marie Hague

Lois Wehrly

Carol Braman

Naomi Vance

Elaine Hall

Judy Cowles

Lois Willey



*Repairman Simeon Draper and Agent Ruth Stens at the old switchboards*



# **SUMMER VISITS to PLACES of HISTORICAL INTEREST**

THE BASKET SHOP owned and run by Benjamin Higgins, is located on Rte. 143 between Chesterfield and W. Chesterfield. Mr. Higgins will explain the process of making ash baskets to interested passers-by. No particular hours.

THE BLANDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING is on Route 23 in the center of Blandford. On exhibit are memorabilia of the town from the time of its settlement down through the years. Agricultural tools, china and glassware are some of the featured items in the collection. Tours can be arranged by calling (413) 848-2843 or (413) 848-2787.

THE BRYANT HOMESTEAD in Cummington, where William Cullen Bryant spent his early years, is located just off Route 112 between Worthington and Cummington. It opens June 14 and closes October 14. Adults at \$1.00 and children at \$.25 can visit the Homestead Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or holidays between 1 and 5 o'clock.

THE CHESTER MUSEUM opened last year as part of Chester's Bicentennial celebration. The exhibits in the museum portray the past and present of Chester. Last fall a room on mining and minerals was opened. The museum is located on the second floor of the Old High School on Route 20 in the village of Chester. It is open Wednesday from 7-9:00 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday from 1-4:00 p.m.

THE CHESTERFIELD MUSEUM under the care of the Chesterfield Historical Society, is located on North Rd. in Chesterfield, behind the library. Open 2-5:00 Saturdays.

CONWELL ACADEMY of Worthington is the performing hall for a series of summer concerts conducted by the Schrade Family. The concerts will feature the Schrade family of concert pianists as well as many visiting musicians. The Academy overlooks Bradley Falls in South Worthington. Concerts will be held every Sunday at 3:00 from July through September 4th (with the exception of August 21).

THE EDWIN SMITH HISTORICAL MUSEUM is located in the Westfield Atheneum. 'A museum about Westfield', it houses old, rare, and unusual books, a restored whip snapper machine, old fashions and parasols. Free to public it is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 1-5:00 and on Friday from 7-9:00 p.m.

THE KINGMAN TAVERN OF CUMMINGTON houses a replica of a 19th century general store, an old working cider mill, tools, and family heirloom donations which complete a house as it would have looked in the 19th century. It is open Saturdays in July and August from 1-5:00 p.m. and by appointment any time — (413) 634-5359 or (413) 634-8868. Donation appreciated.

THE MABLE ROOT HENRY HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF GRANVILLE houses the town's Bicentennial Quilt, Displays of Miniatures, early church records, Histories, genealogies, and local artifacts. It is located in the Granville Library and is open Wednesday and Saturday from 2-5:00 and other times by appointment. Call (413) 357-6671. No admission charged.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

JULIA Y. ANDERSEN is a long-time resident of Middlefield. DONNA ARCHAMBAULT lives in Housatonic and is an art teacher with the Southern Berkshire Regional school district.

ELLA S. CHIPMAN lived in the Bartholomew Ward house on Chipman Road in Middlefield in the late 1800's and early 1900's. A sheaf of her writings was found in the attic.

LESLIE COOK is a student at Hamilton College in New York. She is the daughter of KARIN COOK who lives in Worthington, and has drawn illustrations for STONE WALLS since the first issue.

BERNARD DREW lives in Windsor, is a member of the Windsor Historical Commission, and does drawing and free-lance writing as a hobby.

ALEXANDER FORBES was a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club early in this century.

DEBBIE HARRINGTON of Montgomery is assistant grocery manager at a super market. She does art-work, including signs and lettering as a hobby.

KRISTIN JAY has drawn many illustrations for STONE WALLS. She now lives in Southwick.

CARL S. JOSLYN was one of the founders of Worthington Health Association and has lived in Worthington for over thirty years.

GEORGE LARRABEE, a resident of Huntington, is a writer for the National Muzzle Rifle Association.

CHARLES B. LYMAN was T. L. HENDRICK'S great grandfather, and was born and grew up in Chester.

BRUCE MCMILLAN is a professional photographer.

VIRGINIA LADD OTIS, resident of Goshen and free-lance writer.

PRISCILLA SARAFIN has lived on Ireland Street in Chesterfield for many years.

RUTH STEINS has been a life-long resident of Russell. She has been an active community member all her life.

PERCY WYMAN was born in Blandford, the son of Ely and Abby Wyman. He now lives in Westfield.

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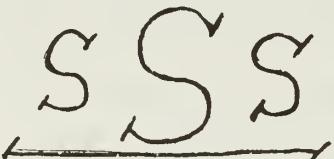
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